

Message Text

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SUBJ: IRISH FOREIGN AID PROGRAM

1. JOHN KELLY, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, IN A SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR FEBRUARY 17 ANNOUNCED THAT THE GOI IS PROVIDING 5,705,000 POUNDS (ABOUT \$11.4M) IN AID TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN 1976. THIS IS ALMOST DOUBLE THE AMOUNT SPENT IN 1975. KELLY SAID, "THIS REPRESENTS A VERY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION INDEED TO REDRESSING THE INADEQUACY OF IRELAND'S DEVELOPING ASSISTANCE PROVISION, ESPECIALLY IN THE LIGHT OF CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS."

2. KELLY EXPLAINED THAT THE INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT ALLOCATED WAS NOT ACCOUNTED FOR SOLELY BY INCREASES IN MANDATORY CONTRIBUTIONS, BUT BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED VOLUNTARILY TO RAISE ITS MULTILATERAL CONTRIBUTIONS AS WELL AS ITS BILATERAL AID PROGRAMS. HE NOTED THAT WHILE IT IS DESIRABLE THAT A LARGE PART OF DEVELOPMENT AID BE CHANNELLED THROUGH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THROUGH THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT THAT IRELAND HAVE A DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROVISION OF AID. KELLY SAID "A BILATERAL AID PROGRAM IS ALSO IMPORTANT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRISH PUBLIC OPINION. THE RELATIVE ANONYMITY

OF MULTILATERAL AID ARRANGEMENTS OFFERS LITTLE SCOPE FOR STRIKING THE IMAGINATION OR AROUSING THE ENTHUSIASM OF OUR PEOPLE FOR A RAPIDLY-EXPANDED IRISH CONTRIBUTION TO THE THIRD WORLD."

3. KELLY ALSO STRESSED THE FACT THAT IRELAND HAS A NUMBER OF UNIQUE SKILLS AND INSIGHTS TO OFFER THE DEVELOPING WORLD. HE SAID THEY COULD BE BEST PROVIDED THROUGH A BILATERAL AID PROGRAM BUT THAT IRELAND WOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY A ROLE IN EC MULTILATERAL AID ACTIVITIES.

4. COMMENT: THE IRISH GOVERNMENT HAS CONSISTENTLY SHOWN SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING FOR THE PROBLEMS OF THE THIRD WORLD AND HAS TAKEN LIBERAL POSITIONS IN SUCH FORA AS THE 7TH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNGA, UNCTAD, ETC. BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS FOR FOREIGN AID HAVE BEEN LIMITED BECAUSE OF IRELAND'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THE FACT THAT SUCH A RELATIVELY LARGE SUM HAS BEEN EARMARKED FOR FOREIGN AID OUT OF THE TOTAL 1976 CURRENT BUDGET OF 1.7 BILLION POUNDS IS SIGNIFICANT, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION IRELAND'S PRESENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. CURLEY

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